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Social Security and the South

"No Section of the Country Has More to Gain from a Sound Program of Social Security . . ."

By Ira De A. Reid

Associate Executive Director, Southern Regional Council

WHEN the Congress reconvenes in October it will be called upon to handle a mass of legislative bills designed to promote an effective economy for the American people. Never before have there been so many far-reaching proposals for making an economy work for the benefit of the many. In a broad sense, all of this legislation may be interpreted as aspects of our nation's program for social security. Such an interpretation would include not only the activities of the Social Security Board and those additional activities provided for under the Social Security Act, but that broad range of work described by the words, "the social services." This includes housing, recreation, placement and vocational guidance, wages and hours administration, and similar services. Back of it all is the effort to achieve freedom from want, by providing, to quote Sir William Beveridge, author of Great Britain's social security program, "a job while you can work and an income while you can't work." No section of the country has more to gain from a sound program of social security than the South.

Two measures to be discussed by Congress are basic proposals for building this structure of security in the United States —the Murray-Wagner "Full Employment Act of 1945" and the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill, 1945 edition, officially known as "Social Security Act Amendments of 1945." The first bill attempts to create a dynamic approach to the problem of providing expanded production and consumption, thereby creating sufficient job opportunities. As Senator Murray pointed out in a speech to the Senate on January 22, 1945, "This is not a bill to guarantee jobs to any individual. It aims at making real the time-honored right of every American able to work and seeking work to find a job, by giving him the assurance that there are jobs to be had." The second bill deals with every part of the existing social security system and adds a number of new parts, all designed to make effective a cradle-to-grave security for American workers and their families. Both of these bills, if enacted into law, would have a salutary effect upon the South's economy where in 1940 manpower in the best-paid, least foot-loose industries and occupations received an average annual taxable wage per worker of $614—$294 lower than the nation's average taxable wage of $908.

The basic characteristics of the South's economy and its prospects for future development have been told in detail by the specialists who addressed the Southern Regional Council's "Conference on the South's Post-War Economy" held in Atlanta in April, 1945.* The possibilities for increasing industrial and agricultural production and consumption in the region have received more discussion than have the more humanitarian aspects of the social security measure. Yet the average worker in the South has a basic stake in the measures it proposes. What are some of these measures?

The South needs hospitals, and needs them badly. This measure provides for a ten-year program of federal grants and loans for the construction and expansion of hospitals, health centers and related activities. The federal government will pay at least 25 per cent of the cost of a project, and for the poorer states, up to 50 per cent. All of the Southern states have low per capita incomes. Likewise the bill permits the expansion of public health services in the nation. In the poorer states the federal government will pay up to 75 per cent of the amounts expended for an expanded program in public health. Similar grants will be made for maternal and child health and welfare services.

The South requires increased assistance to its needy individuals—the aged, the blind, the dependent children and others. Aid provided to these classes of people has always been low in the South. In the fiscal year 1941-1942 the United States made monthly average payment of $34.01 for the care of dependent children. In the Southern states the payments averaged $21.00. The United States made a monthly average payment of $24.37 to blind persons. In the Southern states monthly payments to the indigent blind in 1941-1942

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*"The South — America's Opportunity Number One," containing the published addresses of this conference may be secured from the Southern Regional Council headquarters. Price 50 cents.

The Veteran Speaks Out

(A strong plea for the rights of Negroes in the South is made here by a soldier—a white Southerner speaking in behalf of the Negroes who fought and worked to win a war against would-be oppressors of mankind and who are coming home to find still far too little of the Democracy in whose name they served. It is to be hoped that many other Southern white soldiers have thought their way to as fair-minded an evaluation of the problem, for if they have they should make possible a longer stride toward assuring for the Negro the rights and opportunities this nation is committed to provide for all citizens. The statement is so forthright and human that SRC will soon publish it in an illustrated leaflet for wide distribution. It first appeared in the "Letters From the People" column of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.)

Editor:

It seems queer to me that in peacetime in the South (I am from Texas) we stop to think of the color or creed of a man before we'll permit him to be educated properly or to hold office. But when there is a war to fight, we never think of creed or color. We say that all men must fight for their freedom.

I wonder just what kind of freedom our colored troops fought and died for! Texans can't give a decent answer to this question, for there is no freedom for the Negro. He is paid as low wages as he can be browbeaten into accepting, and there are some who would work him for nothing, if such were possible.

I am neither colored nor a religious fanatic, but I have seen what the colored troops have done. Without their help, in many instances, the white boys would have lost out.

Perhaps it is best that we keep white and colored segregated in our schools, but it is wrong that we do not offer them the same educational advantages that our own children are given. It is wrong, too, to say that a man who is colored can not work here or there and that, just because he is colored, he can not draw as good wages as the white man.

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THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA, SEPTEMBER, 1945

To attain through research and action programs the ideals and practices of equal opportunity for all peoples in the region.

EDITORIAL

REPRINTED in this issue are two letters that may hold great promise for the betterment of race relations in the South. Two Southern white soldiers, urged by the ideals for which they were asked to fight, raise their voices in behalf of their Negro fellow-soldiers and fellow-citizens. What is even more heartening, they say "a lot of Southern GIs feel the same way." This is good news—for even the most violent demagogues will, for a while at least, be forced to listen to the voice of the veteran.

Whether enough white veterans from the South have "changed their minds" about the Negro to create a new trend in Southern race relations remains, of course, to be seen. A foreign correspondent recently returned from the European theater told us a few days ago that he believed Southern white soldiers in combat units who served with Negro soldiers have definitely acquired a new and tolerant view toward the Negro. He added, however, that he did not believe white Southerners who served behind the lines had changed very much from their inherited prejudice. The letter of Staff Sergeant Joe J. Gilmer seems to bear this out. Yet we may hope that at least some of the "rear echelon" soldiers have also developed a more democratic attitude.

Further evidence that the Southern white soldier is learning new lessons in Democracy is reported by Chaplain James T. Williams in the September 6 issue of *The Christian Index*, Georgia Baptist publication. Chaplain Williams, writing from India, says many soldiers in his unit have thought seriously about the plight of the Negro in the South and affirms that "their ideas and programs are rapidly approaching the things that Jesus taught concerning brotherhood."

These are at least straws in the wind. Let us hope that they are even more—the seeds of a truly democratic concept of human relations and human rights which may in the postwar years bear fruit in wider understanding and cooperation among all Southern people.

SRC Annual Meeting Set for November, New Publication Program Recommended

SRC's Executive Committee, at a special called session in Atlanta September 18, voted to set back the Council's annual meeting from the originally scheduled October 10 date to November 14 and heard proposals for a promotional campaign for new members and a revised publication program with greater emphasis on leaflets for popular consumption.

The Committee, with Dr. Charles S. Johnson presiding, voted to recommend that a "streamlined" publication program outlined by SRC's recently appointed Director of Public Relations, Ray Warwick, be put into effect. The plan calls for publication of special quarterly issues of THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER devoted to a thorough study of a single Southern problem and for coordinated wide distribution of simple, illustrated "popularized" pamphlets on the theme, designed for average readers.

Present at the special session, called because the regular August meeting had to be postponed, were Dr. Johnson, Chairman; Dr. Rufus E. Clement, Mr. C. H. Gillman, Mr. Leonard Haas, Rt. Rev. Msgr. T. James McNamara; and SRC staff members—Dr. Guy B. Johnson, Executive Director; Dr. Ira DeA. Reid, Associate Executive Director; Miss Emily H. Clay, Secretary-Treasurer; and Dr. George S. Mitchell, Director of Veterans Services.

Dr. Howard W. Odum, President, and Mr. Carter Wesley, Vice-President, both of whom had planned to come, were unable to attend because of last-minute developments.

Organized Battle for Rights Launched in Louisiana

The Citizens Committee of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People of Louisiana this month launched a campaign to raise $100,000 to finance a planned drive for civil rights.

The four-point program proposes to obtain the ballot for Negroes, break discriminatory registration practices, operate registration schools throughout the state, launch a series of court cases to equalize educational facilities, combat unfair treatment by police, and integrate Negroes into the Home Guard.

First case in the program is the suit brought by Edward Hall against T. J. Nagel, registrar of St. John the Baptist Parish, charged with illegally denying Hall the right to register.

Negro Leaders Announce Clear-Cut Principles

A clear-cut statement of aims and the means of achieving those aims was made in Washington late in June by more than 55 Negro leaders representing 34 organizations. The following brief excerpts from the statement reveal a determined and practical approach:

"Negro citizens are still subjected to second-class citizenship within their own country. . . .

"Negroes in America declare their determination to struggle with all lawful means at their disposal to achieve the exercise of full American citizenship rights. . . .

"Let no political party presume on Negro votes. These will be cast in the interest of the national welfare. More than most voters, Negroes today are voting on the basis of men and issues rather than party affiliation. . . .

"The nation will not have accorded the Negro American full citizenship and will not have made Democracy real to the American people generally, until every racial impediment to voting shall have been removed and until organized government, national and local, shall discontinue every racial distinction in its dealings with the people. . . ."

The statement also called for full employment and for the end of colonialism by international action.

Returning Negro Veteran Faces Special Problems

The Negro veteran seeking to establish himself in civilian life will face difficulties "at three points . . . not encountered by white veterans," says William A. Caudill in *Negro GIs Come Back*, a study distributed by the American Council on Race Relations. The 18-page mimeographed booklet analyzes the problems and possibilities of veterans' services and job and educational opportunities the Negro veteran may find on his return home.

The study lists these generalized problems that may apply specifically to the Negro soldier-turned-civilian:

"First, he will have less access to places in which he may obtain information about his benefits and where he should apply for them. Second . . . he will be subject to careless treatment and possible discrimination in the offices where his rights are administered. Lastly, he has the very special problem, particularly in the South, that, even if he were to obtain sufficient information, if he were to meet absolutely no differential treatment in the offices of administering agencies, he would still not have the wide choice of school, loan institutions, or jobs open to the white veteran."

Public Relations Director Appointed to SRC Staff

The Southern Regional Council, continuing recent staff expansions designed to intensify SRC's services, has appointed Ray Warwick, formerly of the Associated Press, as Director of Public Relations.

Mr. Warwick, who joined the staff in mid-August when the August issue of THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER was already in the hands of the printer, will be charged with editing SRC's various publications and publicizing Council activities.

A native Georgian, Mr. Warwick has had ten years of varied experience in news and editorial work. He was in the Atlanta bureau of AP for two and a half years and had just been offered an assignment as foreign correspondent for AP in Europe when he resigned to join SRC. His past experience includes service with United Press and several newspapers in the South, and more than three years as editor of trade and industrial magazines.

Mr. Warwick is vice-president of the Atlanta Newspaper Guild and a member of the executive board of the Atlanta Industrial Union Council (CIO).

Of his new post as Director of Public Relations for SRC, Mr. Warwick says that he is spending his first weeks learning all he can of SRC operations but is enthusiastic over the possibilities the job offers for constructive work. At present he is planning a program of publications to bring the problems of the South directly and forcibly to the attention of the average Southerner.

Dr. Bond Leaves Georgia For Lincoln University

Dr. Horace Mann Bond, President of Fort Valley State College (Georgia) from 1939-1945, has become the first Negro president of Lincoln University (Pennsylvania). Dr. Bond is one of the outstanding alumni of Lincoln University, a school established by the Presbyterian Church for the education of Negro men in 1854.

The educational experience of Dr. Bond has been wide. Trained at Lincoln and at the University of Chicago, where he received his graduate degrees, he has worked at institutions for the education of Negro youth in Oklahoma, Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana and Georgia. He is the author of *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order* and *Negro Education in Alabama.*

Apart from his administrative tasks in education Dr. Bond was a spirited and helpful influence in many of the South's social movements. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Southern Regional Council, and President of the Association of Land Grant Colleges.

Reconversion in the South and the Returning Veteran

By George S. Mitchell
Director of Veterans Services, Southern Regional Council

THE Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion has just announced that at least seven million men will be coming back to civilian life within the next year. At present, the Army alone is letting out 170,000 a month, and before long will release half a million a month.

Unemployment on August 15th was 1,100,000. The OWMR expects this to rise to 5,000,000 or more within three months, and perhaps to 8,000,000 before next spring.

Reconversion in the South will have a number of special problems. Our wartime industry was concentrated in aircraft and shipbuilding, which are taking the heaviest cutbacks. These and other war industries have given us thousands of new skilled workers who will anxiously seek ways to use their full abilities. Students of southern agriculture are agreed that our farms are in for reorganization and much mechanization. In this process the countryside will cease to be a haven of refuge for the industrially unemployed. It is even argued that within the next ten years we should plan to get a third of our southern farm people into town and city jobs.

If these adjustments are left to what are called "automatic forces," the strains will be beyond endurance. They would undoubtedly produce extraordinary political and other movements.

Our problem is to provide enough jobs in industry and enough modern, successful farms to use the highest skills of all our returning servicemen and all our civilian breadwinners. This will take an administrative effort of the first order. It need not be exclusively or even principally a government administrative effort. It will be best done if it is undertaken simultaneously and cooperatively by all branches of government, by industry, voluntary organizations, and every type of civic body.

A good beginning has been made in all the states with local organizations to help the veterans in getting back into civilian life. The various local veterans' service centers will need to be strengthened as their jobs increase. The work of the Employment Service is growing each day. Our colleges and high schools, and particularly our vocational schools, have a great adjustment to make, one which can be permanently helpful in stepping up technical education to supply the needs of our increasingly technical economy. Public and private organizations will be called on for responsibilities never before assumed.

The Southern Regional Council offers its services as a clearing house for people and organizations taking up these new responsibilities. We shall try to keep in close touch with the growth of new veterans' services in the South. It is planned to survey and estimate the machinery as it is being built, state by state. We shall be ready to pass on to any community the best experience of others. What will really be happening will be the growth of a grass roots planning movement such as the South has not had before. The Council's job in the forefront of this movement is obvious.

We can be of use only as we learn of local problems. It will be most helpful if readers of THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER will let SRC know of places where action is needed.

South Carolina Committee Hears Progress Report

Reports of progress in interracial activity in some sections of South Carolina and predictions of further gains were heard at the recent meeting in Columbia of the executive board of the state committee of SRC.

The group also adopted a resolution urging the state legislature to grant appropriations to the State College "sufficient to maintain and improve an accredited college on the undergraduate level for the Negro youth of the state," and to consider and communicate with other Southern states on the possibility of a tax-supported regional graduate school for Negroes.

J. M. Hinton of Columbia reported that the Richland County Committee, of which he is secretary, had by conference with officials gained some improvements in problems of transportation, police treatment of Negroes, and prison conditions.

"Our members are not discouraged," Mr. Hinton reported, "and though we have not been able to accomplish many of the things we had hoped, yet the future is bright, and though we may not have any false illusions over any overnight change, we very definitely feel that the Richland County Committee has made and is making very definite progress."

Mr. Hinton reported that the Richland group had become affiliated with SRC. Chairman Marion A. Wright, presiding, read to the board the agreement of affiliation of the South Carolina Committee with SRC. Mr. Wright urged the development of local units in certain parts of the state, and Mr. Hinton said that in all the objectives of the group local units of SRC would be important.

'South Today' Magazine Suspends Publication

Editors Lillian Smith and Paula Snelling this month announced suspension of their magazine, *South Today,* but expressed the hope that later a managing editor might be enlisted to handle the resumption of publication.

In a formal announcement issued from Clayton, Ga., where the magazine was launched in 1936, the editors stated that obligations growing out of publication of Miss Smith's Novel, *Strange Fruit,* led to suspension of *South Today.* The announcement said Miss Smith would be engaged this fall in readying *Strange Fruit* for Broadway production and that later she was to write a non-fiction book.

The South Today Press shall continue to issue pamphlets, the editors said.

Newspaper Deplores Loss Of N. C. Press Head

News of the resignation of William T. Couch as director of the University of North Carolina Press drew editorial comment from the *Atlanta Journal,* which said, "Southern letters and higher education have suffered a distinct loss. . . ." Mr. Couch has accepted the directorship of the University of Chicago Press.

"Mr. Couch's leaving the South is another episode in an old and melancholy story," the editorial said. "He goes to Chicago where he will receive twice the salary the University of North Carolina is able to pay him.

"East and West continue to draw heavily on our best talent because they seem able to offer financial inducements which cannot or will not be met. Especially is this true in the matter of higher education. When will our legislatures and the governing bodies of our universities and colleges awaken to the importance of conserving our richest asset, our human resources?"

Social Security

(*Continued from page* 1)

averaged $14.23. New provisions in the Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill would offset these differentials.

There are, however, two extremely significant aspects of the Social Security Bill that would benefit the South. One is the setting up of a national system of public employment offices. A full measure of employment security is not now possible in the United States with 48 separate state employment services, operating as they did prior to January 1, 1942. There is a great need for the development of an integrated national network of public employment offices in order that full employment information and opportunities may be made available to all workers despite their geographical location.

The second significant aspect of this bill is its provision for a national insurance system. We already have in the United States insurance for old age and survivors. In 1941-1942 the average payment of such insurance in the United States was $21.83 a month. Not one of the Southern states had as high a monthly average. Oklahoma's payments of $20.46 was the only amount averaging more than $20 monthly. The average payment for a Southern state ranged between $8.30 and $11.84. The new bill provides for a broader basis of insurance, increases minimum benefits from $10 to $20 monthly, and the maximum benefits from $85 to $120 monthly. The retirement age for women is lowered from 65 to 60 years. This feature is especially designed to help workers earning less than $150 monthly.

Unemployment insurance and temporary disability insurance is provided up to 26 weeks with benefits ranging from $5 to $30 weekly. A wage credit of $100 for each man or woman in the armed services for each month of service is also proposed.

A prepaid personal health insurance providing for medical care and hospitalization is also proposed.

Finally, the Social Security Act will be amended to include about 15,000,000 agricultural workers, domestic servants, seamen, employees of non-profit institutions, small business men, farmers and professional persons. All employers and employees will pay four per cent of all wages received or paid up to $3,600, as a basis for financing this program. Self-employed persons would pay a five per cent contribution.

A greater security for the Southern worker is at hand. If there is full employment, he need not worry; if there is unemployment, he need not suffer unduly. Because this legislation seeks to reach into the lower depths of economic insecurity and rescue the economically underprivileged as well as the average worker, it holds great promise for the South. Dr. George Mitchell, a member of the Southern Regional Council staff, and for many years a close student of the South's labor, believes that great hope is to be found in these proposed measures. In terms of long-time objectives, Dr. Mitchell says, "The description of the South need no longer be painted in strokes of hunger and poverty. The new South must be built upon a voluntary cooperativeness arrived at through education and a pervasive sense of society's fairness. Here is an opportunity to build that new South within a new nation. If we do not accept it we may find ourselves in an era of undisciplined strife, slack work and bitter motives." Full security, full employment, full opportunity can provide the confidence and the assurance that the South needs now.

The Veteran Speaks

(*Continued from page* 1)

I am afraid that all race prejudice is gone from the boys who have fought this war, and it isn't going to be wise for any man, regardless of race, color, creed or profession, to try to abuse the colored people any more. The veterans of this war have learned that freedom means more than just freedom for the white man.

The South should wake up and build schools for the children of the colored veterans who fought and died to keep America safe from Fascism. Give them the same kind of education given our children. It is not their fault that they are uneducated. It is our fault and that of our forefathers, who brought them as slaves into this country. White boys who have seen Negroes die to save their "buddies" and to help keep America free, are not in favor of the "Jim Crow" law. The politicians had better get busy and get that law off the books, if they want to hold public office. If you don't believe me, find a boy from the South who served overseas in and around colored units during combat—I don't mean a fellow who served in a rear echelon—and ask him his opinion.

This is written in all sincerity by a veteran of four years and seven months' service in the Army, 11 months of it overseas and nine in combat; and he's still overseas.

S/Sgt. Joe J. Gilmer,
Co. C, 301st Med. Bn.

(And here is another letter, especially encouraging because it comes from a veteran from Mississippi, which was recently published in "Yank," the Army magazine. Sergeant Jones' statement is made particularly strong by his frankness and keen sense of right.)

Dear Yank:

I received a copy of your magazine and read that the AMG is letting the Germans go back to school. After that, I read in *Mail Call* about the Jim Crow treatment of colored American soldiers.

Now, I am from Mississippi. Until I came into the Army I hated Negroes. It wasn't anything they did to me; I just didn't like them. Since I have been in the ETO I have fought from D-Day to VE-Day with Negro soldiers. I was wounded twice in one foxhole and a Negro saved my life by using his first-aid kit on me. Then he carried me to where a doctor would work on me. This was under heavy fire. Later, he died. He was from New York and he knew I was from the South where he had no freedom.

Many Negro soldiers have died on the front for American soldiers who thought Jim Crow was right. So, if the Germans can have freedom after they have caused so much suffering and destruction, why not let the Negro race have what they fought for? I feel that they should, and a lot of Southern GIs feel the same way.

T/Sgt. Willie Jones.
Germany.